



CITY OF FAIRFAX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, March 1, 2023 6:00 pm
In Person at Economic Development Facility

10300 Eaton Place, Small Conference Room, Fairfax, VA 22030

Commissioners Present:

Chair Kathleen Paley
Vice-Chair Jeff Hermann
Commissioner and Treasurer Fred Cornett
Commissioner Tom Ross
Commissioner and Secretary Beth Young
Commissioner Dawn McGruder

Others Present:

Christopher Bruno, Director, Economic Development Office
Matthew Easley, Assistant Director for Finance and Operations, Economic Development Office
Ashleigh Scarborough, EDA Associate, Economic Development Authority
Nicole Merlene, Senior Assistant Director, Economic Development Office
Andrew Wilson, Project Manager, Economic Development Authority
Tara Borwey, Interim Programs Manager, Economic Development Office

1. Call to Order Chair Paley
2. Adoption of Updated March EDA Meeting Agenda [**VOTE**] Commissioners
 - a. Motion to adopt passes unanimously.
3. Adoption of February Meeting Minutes [**VOTE**] Commissioners
 - a. Motion to adopt approved 5-0.
 - b. Chair Paley abstained due to her absence from the February meeting.
4. Convene a Closed Session Meeting of the EDA All
 - a. I move that the Economic Development Authority convene a closed meeting under Section 2.2-3711.A.5 of the *Code of Virginia* for discussion concerning a prospective business where no previous announcement has been made of the business interest in locating or expanding its facilities to the City of Fairfax.

All commissioners in favor of the motion, please signify by voting aye. Those opposed to the motion, please vote nay. The vote is 6 in favor of the motion and 0 opposed. The Economic Development Authority retired into a closed meeting at 6:02 pm.
5. Reconvene the Regular Meeting
 - a. At 6:29 pm the Economic Development Authority concluded its closed meeting for discussion concerning a prospective business where no previous announcement has been made of the business interest in locating or expanding its facilities to the City of Fairfax.

I move that each of us certify that, to the best of each Commissioner's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements in the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and (ii) only public business matters identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered.

All Commissioners in favor of the certification motion please signify by voting aye. Those opposed to the motion please vote nay. The motion passes unanimously.

~~6. Consideration of Business Investment Agreement [VOTE]~~

7. Commissioner Discussion on Financial Management Roles

- a. Director Bruno is requesting to allow a second signatory on checks and bank statements: Senior Assistant Director Nicole Merlene.
 - i. The Commissioners agree.

8. Business Investment Programs Update

Senior Assistant Director Merlene

- a. Senior Assistant Director Merlene begins with a stated goal of the City Council, to keep commercial vacancies below regional and national averages, as well as increase tax revenue.
 - i. The business investment team is focused on 2 areas: commercial property assessment and business license taxes.
- b. By and large, real estate assessments are the number 1 income for the City.
 - i. It is broken up 2/3 to residential and 1/3 to commercial.
- c. It is important for the EDA to play a part in the development sphere.
 - i. Allows new growth to be encouraged, especially in buildings that have not traditionally been filled.
 - ii. The more a space is redeveloped for better use, the higher potential rent income the City has to gain.
- d. Every business is taxed based on their gross receipts, this rate varies by industry.
- e. Senior Assistant Director Merlene examines CoStar every month to see if any business leases are ending within the next year. She then contacts them and their broker to confirm they are renewing their lease, or staying in Fairfax City elsewhere.
- f. Worked with our tax assessment office to prioritize the top 30 buildings that we could potentially have increased tax growth in. When programs like LIFFT are launched, we can encourage them into these buildings.
- g. Senior Assistant Director Merlene gave a high-level overview of LIFFT.

9. Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce Update

Executive Director Rose/ Chair Church

- a. Executive Director Rose gave an update to the EDA about the growth of membership in the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce over the course of the past few years.

- b. Executive Director Rose gave an update on the current standing of the CFCC and some upcoming events.
- c. Since Executive Director Rose's tenure, the CFCC has added committees and councils, such as a government affairs committee that is working to put together policy position statements, for the board to approve.
- d. The Economic Summit is coming back in April. The Fairfax City EDA and Fairfax County EDA will work with the CFCC to showcase what is going on in Fairfax City.
- e. Chair Church adds that the CFCC has a great group of volunteers who are focused on the City.
- f. The CFCC's website is full of helpful information on benefits, events, and membership information.

10. MEC Program Update

Center Director Hill

- a. Center Director Hill begins with presenting the MEC's marketing strategy for the calendar year.
 - i. Two of the primary goals of the MEC are to increase regional awareness by 50% and achieve 80% occupancy of the space.
 - ii. Developing 3 types of events: basic educational series, deeper dive classes, and a master class series.
 - iii. Increase interest in MEC membership focal points: the ecosystem, the expertise that the MEC has available, and the wrap around services.
 - iv. Center Director Hill states his goal for 80% occupancy is because that reaches roughly break even for the fiscal year.
 - v. Center Director Hill emphasizes the necessity for him to be face-to-face in the community, to market the MEC.
 - vi. 6 offices have been signed in the past few days, moving the MEC to roughly 60% occupancy. He expects 2 more to sign soon.
 - vii. The types of companies the MEC is looking for: immediate situation is flexible due to wanting to fill the space, the goal is to pivot to more of a STEM model.
 - viii. The MEC is testing in person educational, networking events.
 - ix. The goal is to get 25-30 mentors in the next year to hold a number of different events.
 - x. The Commissioners share that CLE sessions could be beneficial for the MEC.
 - xi. Goal of engaging in 8 different events a month, some are virtual and some are in person.
 - xii. Center Director Hill says they are not currently using any incentive programs to gain tenants, but something they could be interested in.

xiii. Soon applying for a grant, that would support another full-time person to assist Center Director Hill.

xiv. Currently upgrading the old website on an ongoing basis.

1. New photos of the space, collateral, and videos to promote the space will be displayed.

2. The website will take several more weeks to complete.

xv. A current virtual client is looking to become an office tenant in the next week.

1. A multi-office deal is done, 2 offices and all 3 labs are off the market.

This was a client that was previously from a lab space in Manassas.

xvi. Chair Paley adds that there is so much that the EDO has to offer to help pair and get the word out on the MEC.

11. ED Operations/Administration/Partnerships/Programs

Assistant Director Easley

a. Assistant Director Easley informs the EDA that the IDA Economic Development Summit will be from April 26th-28th that is being hosted by the downtown Norfolk Council.

i. Currently working through finalizing the plan for the conference.

ii. Economic Development will be speaking at a session about incubating entrepreneurs, which will highlight the next wave of economic development.

1. This is directly related to the MEC.

b. Collision '23 is being held in Toronto, Canada from June 26th-29th.

i. The EDA is working with Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, Arlington County, and Prince William County to partner with Economic Development; which is collectively through the NOVA EDA, to determine the best and most monetarily responsibility way to attend this conference.

ii. Widely recognized as a hub for networking, learning, and development, as well as lead generation.

iii. Opportunity and ability to bring a business with the EDA to highlight them and have a small booth.

1. Currently working to see if there is a good fit in the MEC to attend this trip.

c. Flex

Interim Programs Manager Tara Borwey

i. Interim Programs Manager Borwey begins with updating the EDA that Hammrock's restaurant has joined the Flex Card program.

ii. There are 11 restaurants that are on Flex Card and participating in Restaurant Week.

iii. At the end of February's "bogo", Flex Card has over \$95k in cards sold, and over \$61k redeemed.

d. Women's History Month

- i. Planning on the EDO/EDA recognizing Women's History Month via social media and doing outreach with women owned businesses in Fairfax City.
 - ii. The goal is to highlight women owned businesses in Fairfax City.
 - iii. Will likely be asking for the EDA's support to have more recognition of these businesses in FY24.
- e. Restaurant Week 2023
 - i. Fairfax City Council officially proclaimed March 6-12th as Restaurant Week.
 - ii. Media coverage and social media posts are active.

12. NoVA Labs Update

Project Manager Wilson

- a. Project Manager Wilson notifies that the date of the grand opening is March 18th.
- b. Assistant Director Easley is working with PM Wilson, President Matthews, Commissioner Ross, other NOVA Labs and City staff, and Program Manager Borwey, to ensure all city requirements are met as the run of show is developed.

~~13. New Business~~

~~All~~

14. Public Comment

Public

- a. William Pitchford from Smarter Growth congratulates Chris Bruno on his 40 under 40 Economic Development Award.
 - i. Smarter Growth along with the CFCC and the EDA continue to move forward with the Development 101 workshop. The date will be May 10th at 6pm located in the WillowWood large conference room. The goal is to inform the public about commercial real estate development with a tie into the small area plans.
- b. Executive Director Tess Rollins from the Old Town Fairfax Business Association shares that the OTFBA is planning the Asian Festival on Main which will be on May 21st, the goal is 20k attendees. Hoping to bring in more visitors, facilitate more entertainment, and learn more about Asian culture.
- c. Amir Eftekhari from the Planning Commission for Fairfax City, expresses his goal of creating a stronger connection between the Planning Commission and the EDO and Commissioners.

15. Adjourn

*****Next Meeting: Wednesday April 12, 2023*****

6pm, 10300 Eaton Pl. Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Subject to Change. Please Check fairfaxcityconnected.com for more information.